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“MYSTERIUM” AND “SACRAMENTUM” IN THE VULGATE AND OLD LATIN VERSIONS

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In view of present-day discussion concerning the indebtedness of early Christianity to the mystery-religions, any thorough investigation into the use and meaning of terms that are common to both must be of interest. The particular line of inquiry that I desire to present does not pretend to be this, and, as a matter of fact, was suggested by other considerations. The marked resemblance of the terminology of the Vulgate to that of scholasticism, and the dependence of the latter upon the former, have been frequently noted. Instances that occur to anyone are the *gratia plena* (Luke 1:28) for *κεχαριτωμένη* and the *poenitentiam agite*¹ (Matt. 3:2 and 4:17) for *μετανοείτε*. These are faithful translations, but with the later usages of the terms, when the original was forgotten, they became at once inadequate and misleading. The Virgin of the Lukan narrative “endowed with grace” thus becomes a heavenly mediatrix “dispensing grace,” and the first word of the Gospel message to Galilean peasants is identified with the requirement of mediaeval discipline, “do penance.” Similarly, one of the Vulgate readings for *μυστήριον*—*sacramentum*—is held responsible for the technical senses of that term in scholasticism. It is a far cry from the Roman military oath to the Seven Sacraments of Peter Lombard, or the *Sacramentum*, *Res sacramenti*, and *Virtus sacramenti* of Catholic theology. Accordingly, Professor Findlay writes:

The Greek *μυστήριον* in Christian Latin became *mysterium*, and thus passed into modern languages. The kindred *mystic* and *mystagogue*, imported directly from the Greek, point to the primary significance of this word. In 8 NT passages [out of 27 or 28 where *μυστήριον* occurs] the Latin Vulgate replaced *mysterium* by the alien rendering *sacramentum*, which has taken on with modifications the meaning of the original.²

¹Though Mark 1:15 (Vulgate) has *poenitemini*.

²Hastings, 1-vol. *Dictionary of the Bible* (1909), s.v. “Mystery.”

This is indeed a simple account of the matter, but shall it be allowed to stand? Bearing in mind the class of readers for whom the statement was intended, and the difficulty of doing justice to all the facts of the case in three concise sentences, one would be slow to criticize it. But as anything like a full and accurate summary of the data it leaves much to be desired. This is important, because what we have here also represents, if I mistake not, a very common impression, which is at variance in some essential points, with things as they really are. To show this is the chief purpose of the present discussion.

The Vulgate rendering of *μυστήριον* is the first point to be examined. The word occurs three times in the Synoptists (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10), twice in Romans (11:25; 16:25), and six times in I Cor. (2:1, 7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51)—if, with Westcott and Hort, Moffatt (*v.i.*), and others, we read it in place of *μαρτύριον* in 2:1. In all these 10 or 11 cases the Vulgate has *mysterium*. It is when we pass to Ephesians and Colossians that *sacramentum* first comes into view, where it is adopted in 5 cases out of 10—in Ephesians, 4 out of 6. There is a solitary instance of *μυστήριον* in II Thess. (2:7)—*mysterium*—then follow 2 in the Pastorals, I Tim. 3:9—*mysterium*, and I Tim. 3:16—*sacramentum*. Finally, there are 4 cases in the Apocalypse (1:20; 10:7; 17:5, 7), only one of which, the first, is *sacramentum*. The most remarkable collocation of the two renderings is Eph. 3:3, 4, and 9, thus: "By revelation was made known unto me the *sacramentum* . . . ye can perceive my understanding *in mysterio Christi* . . . to make all men see what is the *dispensatio sacramenti*." With this we may compare Col. 1:26-27, "the dispensation of God . . . even the *mysterium* which hath been hid . . . the riches of the glory *sacramenti huius* among the Gentiles." The "mysteries of the Kingdom" in Matt. 13:11 and parallels is *mysteria*; "stewards of the mysteries" (I Cor. 4:1) is *dispensatores mysteriorum*. On the other hand, as already noted, "great is the mystery of godliness" (I Tim. 3:16) becomes *sacramentum pietatis*, and the famous marriage passage (Eph. 5:32), "this is a great mystery," etc., reads *sacramentum hoc magnum est*. In one place at least (Rev. 1:20) any

Latinist would approve the choice of *sacramentum*—"the sacred symbol" of the seven stars—and would be equally disappointed not to find it in Rev. 17:5—"on her forehead a name written, by way of symbol"—where *mysterium* is adopted.

So much then for the actual data supplied by the Vulgate. Taking these only at their face value, it would appear that the two terms were regarded as ordinary synonyms, and that *mysterium* was preferred to *sacramentum* three times out of four. But such a conclusion, or any inference whatever as to the quality of the translation, would be quite premature at this stage of the inquiry. The Vulgate may be appraised only as any revised version is appraised, i.e., with some reference to the version it aims to correct or supersede. Touching the matter in hand, the contemporary or earlier usage of the terms in question, it is therefore necessary to examine the readings of the Old Latin versions.

The slightest acquaintance with the fragmentary remains of this earlier work which we possess enables one to appreciate some of the difficulties under which Jerome labored, and to understand how in his preface to the Gospels he can refer to these versions as "tot enim sunt poene quot codices." He was confronted with a great mixture of sources. Bit by bit he had to assemble his material. It was before the days of Latin pandects, but there existed a bewildering multitude of Latin texts, which it is certain we can never trace to one original.¹ In the effort to classify the nine or ten chief MSS² which represent the ante-Hieronimian versions it has been customary to distinguish, (1) the African, the earliest form, middle of third century; (2) the European Latin, Western Europe, fourth century; and (3) the Italian Latin, a later revision of (2) and the version apparently used by Augustine. That this third type of the text was the basis of the Vulgate is generally conceded. It is represented by only two MSS of importance, f, Cod. Brixianus, and q, Cod. Monacensis. The European Latin is richer in remains, which go back to the time when the OL version was in full church use in many parts of Western Europe. The oldest of these MSS, a, Cod. Vercellensis (fourth century) was written by

¹ Wordsworth, "The Corbey St. James," *Studia Biblica*, I, 134 (Oxford, 1885).

² Burkitt, *Texts and Studies*, IV, 3 and *OL Italia* (Cambridge, 1896), enumerates 16.

Eusebius during his retreat from the Arians, after the Council of Milan. He died before the Vulgate was begun, and is not known to have left Northern Italy. Of the same type, but seven centuries later, is c, Cod. Colbertinus, from Languedoc, the country of the Albigenses. The isolation of that heretical community from the rest of Western Christendom accounts for the writing of an OL text at so late a period.¹ All these are MSS of the Gospels, and therefore, for our present purpose, are of limited value. It is with the earliest form of the OL, the African Latin, that we are chiefly concerned. Here again the MSS fail us when we travel beyond the Gospels, with an important exception to be noted later on. Cod. Palatinus, e (fourth century), and Cod. Bobiensis, k (fifth century), probably represent the form in which the Gospels were read in Carthage as early as the middle of the third century, a conclusion based on citations from Tertullian and Cyprian.²

This brief description of the three great classes of OL texts is for the purpose of exhibiting the point implied in Jerome's words above quoted, that the *texts* are properly representative of so many different *versions*.³ A sample comparison of their renderings may be noted here as an illustration of the great diversity that obtained. It concerns a familiar word, δοξάζω (occurring 37 times in the Gospels), as it stands in the familiar passage (Matt. 5:16), "may glorify your Father which is in heaven." In this, a and b (European) have *magnifico*; d (the Latin of Beza, also European) and f (Italic), agreeing with the Vulgate, *glorifico*; while e and k (African) read *clarifico*. As a matter of fact, the African text has a number of distinctly marked peculiarities. Burkitt classifies them under three heads, as follows: (1) occasional transliteration of Greek words, where other texts have the vernacular, thus k in Mark 12:23, *anastasis*; (2) the opposite practice, e.g., *similitudo* for *parabola*, *bene nuntiare* for *evangelizare*, *tinguere* for *baptizare*; (3) many common words occurring in the Vulgate and service books have less usual synonyms; thus, *claritas* for *gloria*, *sermo* for *verbum*, *felix* for

¹ Burkitt, *op. cit.*

² Novatian's quotations in *De Trinitate* are also of value in this connection; see below.

³ The practice of some writers in referring to "OL" readings quite ignores this.

beatus, saeculum for *mundus* (in John 8:12, e reads *lumen saeculi* for *lux mundi*).¹ As these are not "African" words, the explanation of dialectical peculiarities is at once ruled out.²

It is then a matter of interest to note at this point that while q (Cod. Monacensis)—Italic version—supposed to be Jerome's immediate source, reads *mysterium* in Matt. 13:11, k (the Bobbio MS, African version) has *sacramentum* here and in the parallels.

The data thus far alluded to are confined to the Gospels. It was to be expected that the attempt would be made to recover the African version from the writings of the North African Fathers, and this field of research has been worked over chiefly by the Germans for the last fifty years from Rönsch to von Soden, the former (Leipzig, 1871) dealing with Tertullian, the latter (1909) with Cyprian. Such a reconstruction is not so hypothetical as it seems. A precedent was afforded by the preservation of an almost uninterrupted text of the Apocalypse in the form of a commentary by Primasius in the sixth century. The work and its author are mentioned in terms of the highest praise by Cassiodorus.³ Primasius, bishop of Hadrumentum, is known to us by the part he took in the Three Chapters controversy with reference to Justinian's effort to reconcile the Monophysites.⁴ He was for some time in Constantinople, where he shared the fortunes of Vigilius of Rome. His study of Greek exegesis and his appreciation of the most influential Latin commentary on the Apocalypse—that of the Donatist Ticonius—led to the composition, or rather the editing, of this work on which his fame rests. This earlier writing (the Commentary of Ticonius), by the way, was used by Jerome in his revision of the Commentary of Victorinus. The text of the Apocalypse of Primasius is pre-Cyprian Latin of high purity, and tallies closely with Cyprian's quotations. We are here, then, in the presence of the

¹ Burkitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-14.

² Augustine, commenting on the various readings in Matt. 5:16, writes: "Tria quidem verba sed una res est" (*Contra Serm. Arrianorum*, 35).

³ "Also in our time the predictions of the Apocalypse have been expounded with minute study and with care by the blessed bishop Primasius, the African Primate" (Cass. *De Divinis Lectionibus*, c. ix).

⁴ 551 A.D.

African version of one New Testament book as Jerome knew it. A comparison of its language with that of the Vulgate has shown me about 50 variations in the first chapter alone. An earlier comparison of the *μυστήριον* passages as rendered by the Vulgate with those in the commentary on the Pauline Epistles and Hebrews, ascribed in the *Patrologia*¹ to Primasius, had shown exact correspondence in every case. But Souter, in 1902, definitely established the fact that this latter commentary is by another hand.²

As already noted, there are 4 occurrences of *μυστήριον* in the Apocalypse, and in all 4 Primasius' text reads *sacramentum*.

Returning now to the researches of von Soden and Rönisch, the former gives us for Cyprian's readings,³ *sacramentum* in the Gospel passages, also in I Cor. 2:7, "the wisdom of God *in sacramento*" (Vulg., *in mysterio*), and again, in I Cor. 13:2, *omnia sacramenta* (Vulg., *mysteria*). He gives the word yet again in Eph. 5:32 and Rev. 1:20, in which places the Vulgate agrees. *Mysterium* is absent from von Soden's word-list, presumably because in the version quoted by Cyprian it did not occur.

An important document comes in for consideration at this point of our inquiry, viz., Novatian's treatise *De Trinitate*—so called, though the title is not his⁴—the date of which is certainly prior to 250 A.D., and not earlier than 217 A.D. We are dealing here with a writer whose literary attainments give him an honored place with his contemporaries Tertullian and Cyprian, five of the spuria of Cyprian, his correspondent, being attributed to him by some leading scholars. Indeed, among the Christian writers of the Western church he is the earliest Latin stylist. Tertullian gave the church its Latin dogmatic terminology; it was Novatian, the Roman presbyter, schooled in the works of Vergil and other great classical

¹ Migne, "Pat. Lat.," LXVIII, 409-793.

² Souter, *Text and Canon of the NT*, p. 90 (1913). He ascribes the commentary to Cassiodorus. See also *Sch.-Herz. Encyc.* for Haussleiter's view, IX, 255 (*PRE*, XVI, 56 [1905]).

³ Von Soden, *Das lateinische Neue Testament in Afrika zur Zeit Cyprians*, Leipzig, 1909.

⁴ For the term *Tplax* see H. B. Swete, *Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, pp. 45-47 (London, 1912).

writers, who first made use of it in systematic theological exposition.¹ His familiarity with Tertullian's writings is evident. His acquaintance with Irenaeus' Greek treatise *Against Heresies* is also pretty clearly established. The chief importance of *De Trinitate*, a work of about 20,000 words, lies in the fact, according to Harnack, that it created for the West a dogmatic *Vade Mecum*. It marks the epoch when Tertullian's theology was domesticated at Rome. Jerome, our earliest authority for its existence, describes it as "grande volumen quasi ἐπιτομήν operis Tertulliani."² This indeed raises a difficulty, as there is only one known work of Tertullian that offers itself for any comparison on this score (*Adversus Praxeum*) and the so-styled *Epitome* is a larger work than that of the African Father. But for our purpose Jerome's precise meaning is unimportant. The thing to be noted is that the Vulgate translator was acquainted with this treatise, that he recognized the indebtedness of his Roman predecessor to Tertullian, and, moreover, it is a fair inference that through the medium of *De Trinitate*, if not otherwise, the OL version of North Africa must be reckoned as among Jerome's available sources.

There are some 300 biblical quotations and allusions in the book, over a hundred of these being New Testament citations. Throughout there is considerable variation from the Vulgate, though in most cases the divergence is slight. Here and there Novatian's text is nearer the Greek than Jerome's. Thus in John 8:14 we have *testificor* for μαρτυρῶ (Vulg., *testimonium perhibeo*), in Phil. 2:7 *in similitudine* for ἐν ὁμοιώματι (Vulg., *in similitudinem factus*), and 2:9 *superexaltavit* for ὑπερῴψωσεν (Vulg., *exaltavit*). An interesting instance is Col. 2:15 (RVmg "having put off from himself his body")—*exutus carnem*, so *De Trinitate*, 21, reads, and so Hilary, *De Trinitate*, I, 13. One Italic MS has here *exuens se*, in closer agreement with the Greek ἀπεκδυσάμενος, but the Vulgate has *exspolians*. Our American and English revisers have considered the supplied word, Novatian's gloss, worthy of incorporation in their margin. These cases are cited simply to show how far, apart

¹ Cornelius refers ironically to his learned opponent as ὁ λαμπρότατος, ὁ δογματιστής, etc. (Migne, *Com. ad Antioch.*, III, 761).

² Migne, *De Viris Illustribus*, I, clxx, col. 453.

from the special matter in hand, the African version is entitled to respect.

Novatian does not quote any of the *μυστήριον* passages, but in the nature of the case it was impossible, even in that early stage of Christology, for any writer to deal with the relation of God to the person of Christ without some allusion to mystery. It is then quite in order to observe that the word *mysterium* is not to be found in his treatise, while *sacramentum* is used 9 times. In every one of these places we must render it "mystery."¹ It is thus apparent that this Latin translation of *μυστήριον* which was in common use among the Christians in North Africa was deemed perfectly satisfactory by their contemporary, the cultured Roman presbyter, in the early days of the third century. His testimony is all the more striking from the fact, before mentioned, that he does not quote any of the 28 New Testament passages with which we are concerned, and hence cannot be accused of slavishly copying the Latin scriptural quotations of Tertullian.

But it is time now to consider the great African Father in relation to this matter, and first, as to his biblical quotations. Six of the *μυστήριον* texts in the Epistles are cited as noted by Rönsch.² Of these, Eph. 5:32 and 6:19 ("mystery of the Gospel") are most frequently employed, the latter about a dozen times. In every case the reading is *sacramentum*. It is the view of recent writers

¹ i, *sacramentorum infinita opera*, mysterious operations without limit; ix, *omnium sacramentorum umbras et figuras*, shadows and figures of all mysteries (referring to OT types and prophecies); xviii, *meditabatur in sacramento*, he rehearsed in a mystery; xix, *vim sacramenti*, meaning of the mystery—an allusion to Jacob's name; *per sacramentum passionis*, through the mysterious sign of the Passion, alluding to the crossed hands of Jacob in blessing the sons of Joseph—an idea borrowed from Tertullian, *De Baptismo*; xxiii, *hoc altissimum atque reconditum sacramentum*, this deep and hidden mystery, referring to the Kenosis (Phil. 2:6-11); xxiv, *angelus ordinem istum sacramenti expediens*, the angel explaining that arrangement of the mystery, part of the comment on the Annunciation; xxvi, *sacramentum huius revelationis*, the mystery of this revelation, Peter's confession; xxix, *qui evangelica sacramenta distinxit*, he who has brought out clearly the gospel mysteries. To these may be added *De Cibis Judaicis*, v, the other undisputed work of Novatian, "Christ making plain all things which antiquity covered with the veils of mysteries" (*sacramentorum nebulis*). For some of these translations, as well as for the estimate of Novatian adopted here, see Fausset's edition (Cambridge Patristic Texts), 1909.

² *Itala und Vulgata*, ed. 2 (Marburg, 1895), p. 323.

that Tertullian does not ordinarily quote from a Latin Version, but simply translates from a Greek text. This is Hoppe's¹ opinion as to the Old Testament, and T. Zahn's as to the New Testament. On the other hand, Rönsch² and Briggs³ assume that the pre-Cyprian OL antedates Tertullian, which would carry the version back to 200 A.D. or earlier. Monceaux⁴ affirms that Tertullian possessed translations of Luke, John, Galatians, I Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians, and Souter⁵ argues for the existence of such translations from references in his writings. It is certain that the Scillitan Martyrs⁶ possessed copies of the Pauline Epistles ("libri et epistolae Pauli") and in Souter's⁷ opinion these "could hardly have been in any other language than Latin." The date of the martyrdom was July 17, 180. Von Soden (p. 1611), who, in spite of such evidence, does not concede that Tertullian knew the Latin version, yet virtually admits that at least a standard translation of part of the Gospels was in use in Tertullian's time. We are not concerned especially with the settlement of this question. Of more importance is the use of *sacramentum* in Tertullian's writings. The word is employed by him in three clearly defined senses, (1) a military oath,⁸ (2) mystery,⁹ (3) sacrament¹⁰—this in a great number of passages, e.g., *De Baptismo* begins with the words *Felix sacramentum*.

In this connection it is interesting to note his comments on Pliny's letter to Trajan, in which the statement is made that the Christians of Bithynia were accustomed to meet before dawn to bind themselves by an oath, *sacramento*. In the *Apol. adv. Gentes*, 2, we read, "Pliny asked of Trajan, then emperor, what he should

¹ H. Hoppe, *Syntax und Stil des Tertullians*, 1903.

² *Italia und Vulgata*, also *Das NT Tertullians*, 1871.

³ *Fundamental Christian Faith* (New York, 1913), p. 99.

⁴ *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne* (Paris, 1901), I, 110, 113-18.

⁵ *Text and Canon of the New Testament*, p. 36.

⁶ *Texts and Studies*, I, No. 2 (1891).

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁸ *De Corona Milit.*, c. xi; *Ad Martyres*, c. iii.

⁹ *Adv. Prax.*, c. ii, *oeconomiae sacramentum*, "the mystery of the providential order."

¹⁰ See references in *MPL*, tome I, p. 1306.

do for the future, alleging that, except in their obstinacy in not sacrificing, he had discovered nothing else touching their religious mysteries [*de sacramentis eorum comperisse*] save meetings before daybreak to sing to Christ as God, and to form a common bond of discipline forbidding murder," etc. (*et ad confoederandam disciplinam homicidium, etc., prohibentes*). It will be observed that he refers to these early morning religious services as *sacramenta*, and avoids the word when he speaks of the *oath*, which is described as a united pledge, a sort of "solemn league and covenant," for the term is post-classical and common in ecclesiastical Latin.¹ The occurrence of *sacramentum* here as descriptive of a church service, and without further explanation, in a work addressed to pagans, is significant when one remembers the necessary reticence of the apologist. In the same Apology the sacred rites of the heathen are referred to, not as *mysteria*, but as *ritus vestros*,² a more inclusive term.

All this leads to another line of inquiry. It is desirable to ascertain the meanings of *sacramentum* and *mysterium* outside of Christian circles, their usage in heathen writers and common parlance. To say with Dr. Findlay that *sacramentum* in the Vulgate is "an alien rendering" of *μυστήριον* must imply either that it lacks the authority of previous writers and earlier versions—which in the face of the evidence cannot be his meaning—or that its use instead of *mysterium* is from his point of view illegitimate, in other words, a mistranslation. In effect this is to charge the OL versions and the North African writers with misuse of a scriptural term. It might be enough to say that the Greek scholarship of such men would ordinarily be accepted as a guaranty of the legitimacy of this rendering. Is it to be supposed, for instance, that such a man as Lactantius (*ca.* 285) blundered in using *sacramentum* as "a sacred thing," "a mystery"? This noted apologist, of North African birth, the pupil of Arnobius, was honored by two emperors for his scholarship. Called by Diocletian to Nicomedia as a teacher of rhetoric he afterward became the tutor of Crispus, the son of Constantine. The poet Prudentius, of Tarragona, Spain (348-403), Jerome's contemporary, is another authority of equal eminence.

¹ Andrews, *Latin Lexicon*, s.v. *confoedero*.

² *Adv. Gent.*, xiv.

He often uses the word in the same sense.¹ But how about the pagan usage of these terms?

First, with regard to *mysterium*, the case is very clear. How early it came into the Latin from *μυστήριον* we may not know, but it was certainly centuries before Christianity. The whole group of words, *mysterium*, *mysta*, *mystes*, *mystagogus*, *mysticus*, is quite classical. The Romans had the Mysteries of Ceres, and the name Ceres as the Latin form of Demeter, the Eleusinian goddess (ΓΗ ΜΗΤΗΡ), dates from an old Aeolic transliteration. The Eleusinian Mysteries were *μυστήρια* (κατ' ἐξοχήν) in Greek common parlance centuries before oriental mysteries appeared on the scene, and the word, like its Latin equivalent, became a recognized synonym for sacred rites, in which the sacredness, rather than the secrecy, of the rites, was the dominant thought. The common use of the expression *sacra Eleusinia* for the Mysteries of Ceres would indicate something of the sort.

The history of *sacramentum* is well known. Originally the money deposited by the parties to a suit, it was so called, either because the sum deposited by the losing party was used for a religious purpose,² or, more likely, because it was deposited in a sacred place. Another explanation treats it as *pignus sponsionis*. It was called *sacramentum* because to violate what one has solemnly promised is perfidy: hence, the money is *sacramentum*, a *sacro*. The word then came to mean any civil suit or process. Later it had the sense of the preliminary engagement entered into by the newly enlisted troops, which was followed by something distinct from it, viz., the *jusjurandum*. This was voluntary until after the Second Punic War, when it was exacted by the military tribune. Hence, *sacramentum* became *jusjurandum*, the military oath, and, after the Augustan period, any oath, solemn obligation, or sacred engagement. The idea of sacredness persists in all these meanings of the term—the military use not superseding the juridical—and the

¹ *Peristephanon*, x, 18, and often.

² See Mommsen, *History of Rome*, I, chap. v, "Original Constitution of Rome": "The victims needed for the public service of the gods were procured by a tax on actions at law; the defeated party in an ordinary process paid down to the state a cattle-fine (*sacramentum*) proportioned to the value of the object in dispute."

implication throughout is something like divine sanction or concern for the person's act.

As *mysterium* had the like sense of sacredness, it is easy to see how in the earliest Christian Latin the two words might easily be equated, and the absence of anything like the meaning "secret" in *sacramentum* would be no initial disadvantage or obstacle, rather the reverse in fact, when Latin-speaking Christians sought an equivalent for *μυστήριον*. For, according to the New Testament, and as distinguished from the heathen mysteries, the Christian mysteries are for the many, not for the few. They constitute the matter of Christian preaching, they seek publicity, not concealment, so mystery and revelation are all but synonymous terms.¹ The thing being regarded as inexpressibly sacred, and of divine obligation, *sacramentum* might well be used to describe it. There would thus be avoided any possible heathen associations which clung to the other word. Some such theory appears to be called for to account for the facts, but the facts themselves stand apart from any theory, and are abundantly clear.

There are several other questions which have a definite bearing on this discussion, notably those which deal with the quality of the Vulgate. Into that extensive field it is of course impossible to enter. But there is one consideration to be reckoned with before any judgment is passed on Jerome's translations of *μυστήριον*. It is this: that before his time *mysterium* and *sacramentum* were not only domesticated in the European OL, but had taken on technical senses not unlike those which have been common ever since. Accordingly, to regard the Vulgate as the source of these derived meanings is necessarily a mistake, but the point to be emphasized is that it is quite as misleading to say that Jerome, in eight places, prefers a theological word to a biblical word. As a matter of fact, both were fixed in the theological terminology of the West, and *μυστήριον* had undergone the same experience in the East. The three terms were applied, not merely to the great truths of revelation, and to baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist, but also to the bread and wine after consecration. Moreover, the mystery-sense had by that time become firmly attached to *sacramentum*.

¹ Dr. Findlay in the article cited above.

To give merely a few illustrations, the title of Ambrose's treatise on the Incarnation is *De Incarnatione Dominicae Sacramento*. Hilary, "the Athanasius of the West," who is shortly prior to Jerome (he died in 369), referring to the Eucharist as *mysterium*, speaks of "the sacred rite of the sacraments"—*sacramentorum mysterium*. Theodore (*ca.* 342) writes on I Cor. 10:16-17, "Do not we who receive the Holy Mysteries communicate of the Lord Himself, whose Body and Blood we say they are?" And again, Hilary (*De Trinitate*, VIII, 13), "We truly receive *sub mysterio* His Body."

Now, taking into account Jerome's erudition, his knowledge of the precedent afforded by the African version, his familiarity with Novatian's vocabulary, and that of Cyprian and Tertullian, not to speak of writers nearer his own time, his three years' intimacy in the East with Gregory Nazianzen, which gave him ample opportunity to correct misunderstandings, and then allowing for the fact that he lived in an atmosphere of developed sacramental conceptions, his treatment of *μυστήριον* in the Vulgate is on the whole satisfactory.

This must be our judgment if we join with De Quincey in condemning the popular delusion that "every idea and word which exists or has existed, for any nation, ancient or modern, must have a direct interchangeable equivalent in all other languages." Dr. Moffatt, in the preface to his *New Translation of the New Testament*, quotes these words, adding the remark that "no one who attempts to translate any part of the New Testament is likely to remain very long under such a delusion." He goes on to say that for terms like *λόγος*, *μυστήριον* and *δικαιοσύνη* "there is no exact English equivalent." It is therefore of some interest to see what he does with *μυστήριον*. Three times out of the 28 he renders it "mystery"; 8 times, "open secret"; in 3 texts, "secret"; in 3, "secret purpose"; in 3, "divine secret"; in 2, "secret truth"; in 1, "secret force"; in 2, "divine truth"; in 1, "secret symbol"; in 2, "symbol"—10 terms or phrases in all. The flexibility of Hellenistic Greek is greater, he reminds us, than was once imagined. Certainly he has shown us its possibilities in this respect, and in a way that would probably have staggered Jerome and his predecessors, could

they have imagined the conscientious and painstaking methods of modern translators.

To conclude, it has been the one purpose of this inquiry to set forth facts, though inferences have suggested themselves all along, and in some cases have been stressed. The attempt has been made to trace the reading *sacramentum* as far back as possible. The conclusions that the data seem to warrant are such as the following:

1. That it was a recognized equivalent of *μυστήριον* in the North African version before Cyprian, and —if the version then existed— before Tertullian; in any case this was its use by Christians as early as the middle of the second century and probably earlier.

2. That it is not necessary to assume that it ever had, in common speech or in heathen writers, the mystery sense, "a secret thing"; that as "sacred rite" or "sacred truth" it need not have been sharply distinguished in people's minds from *μυστήριον* in some of the senses of that term.

3. That its connotation to people of Latin speech was in fact not restricted to that of the military oath, and that to Christian people of Latin speech it need not have been so restricted, even in very early times. If we knew precisely what the lapsed Christians of Bithynia said to Pliny about their *sacramentum*, and whether what he understood them to say was intended by them to be a full disclosure of their sacred rites, it would throw light on such a point as this.

4. Finally, it is at all events hard to believe that *sacramentum* was ever regarded as an "alien rendering" of *μυστήριον*, if only for the difficulty of imagining how on such a theory it could ever have taken its place side by side with *mysterium*, which, in sound, in sense, and by right of etymology, might have claimed sole possession of the field.